

SEC. 403. APPLIED SILVICULTURAL ASSESSMENTS.

(a) **ASSESSMENT EFFORTS**- For information gathering purposes, the Secretary concerned may conduct applied silvicultural assessments on Federal lands that the Secretary concerned determines, in the sole discretion of the Secretary concerned, is at risk of infestation by, or is infested with, bark beetles, including Southern pine beetles, hemlock woolly adelgids, emerald ash borers, red oak borers, and white oak borers. Any applied silvicultural assessments carried out under this section shall be conducted on not more than 1,000 acres per assessment.

(b) LIMITATIONS-

(1) **EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN AREAS**- Subsection (a) does not apply to--

(A) a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System;

(B) Federal lands where, by Act of Congress or Presidential proclamation, the removal of vegetation is restricted or prohibited; or

(C) congressionally designated wilderness study areas.

(2) **CERTAIN TREATMENT PROHIBITED**- Subsection (a) does not authorize the application of insecticides in municipal watersheds and associated riparian areas.

(3) **ACREAGE LIMITATION**- Applied silvicultural assessments may be implemented on not more than 250,000 acres using the authorities provided by this title,

(c) PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENT-

(1) **PUBLIC NOTICE**- The Secretary concerned shall provide notice of each applied silvicultural assessment proposed to be carried out under this section in accordance with applicable regulations and administrative guidelines.

(2) **PUBLIC COMMENT**- During the planning stage of each applied silvicultural assessment proposed to be carried out under this section, the Secretary concerned shall provide an opportunity for public input.

(d) **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**- Applied silvicultural assessments carried out under this section are deemed to be categorically excluded from further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). The Secretary concerned need not make any findings as to whether the project, either individually or cumulatively, has a significant effect on the environment.